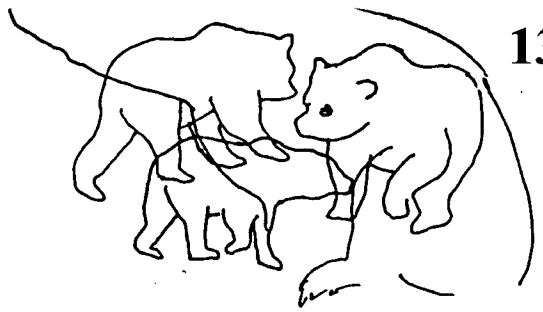


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GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY
COORDINATORS OFFICE
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An Institute of the Rockies Project
Under the Environmental Media Centre

GRIZZLY BEAR RE-INTRODUCTION HEARINGS, BITTROOT MOUNTAINS
Hamilton Hearings, Oct. 1: 4-8pm; Missoula, Oct. 2, 4-8pm.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Box 5127
Missoula, MT 59806

My name is Dr. Charles Jonkel. I have been engaged in bear research for 28 years--field work, teaching, writing. I have done extensive research on black, grizzly, and polar bears. I currently am Director of the Ursid Research Center, and conduct 12 classes on bears each year. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Grizzly Bear DEIS.

I do have specific comments, but I also wish to note that the main obstacles to grizzly recovery have been agency policies, with little notice of public input or wishes, or that of grizzly bear scientists, including myself. I expect little use of my comments, based on past experiences.

For example: the lead agency in establishing the Rattlesnake Wilderness denied for 7 years straight, that there were any grizzlies in the Rattlesnakes. On the 8th year, after it had become a Wilderness, they acknowledge that ofcourse there were grizzlies there. My repeated reports, annually, were ignored for their purposes.

The various agencies have actively denied protecting habitat for the Cabinet Mountains grizzlies, year after year, for almost 20 years, yet acknowledging that there were bears there, and claiming that they wanted recovery there. Pretensions and lies do not recover populations.

In the Bitterroots, the same pattern has been followed. Certain reports of grizzlies already there have been repeatedly denied, in order to maintain existing land management practices. Denials of the existing evidence of bears already being in the Bitterroots, allow the cooperating agencies to classify this plan as re-introduction, rather than augmentation, in order to afford the bears less protection under the ESA, and to protect existing land management practices, delay the protection of corridors.

So it is with reluctance, that I even bother to submit comments. Everything I have to say has been submitted repeatedly in the past,

-any bears put into the area will augment the existing grizzlies in the Bitterroots, and if considered augmentation, will allow the added protection that the ESA allows.

-the Recovery Area should be much larger, to allow for the different soil types in the Bitterroots (vs limestone areas farther north), the different vegetation/plant communities, which in general, are far poorer bear habitat than farther north, and the loss of of such areas as the Bitterroot Valley and the salmon runs, which the earlier grizzlies enjoyed.

3 -the Option that allows grizzly bear management by Committee is a farce--given the system provided, the Committee forever will be dominated by people who will put development before the bears or habitat protection.

4 -recovery should include "Big Wilderness"--adequate for bears, mountain lions, elk, wolverines, and etc., The area is big now, but without the recommendations of NREPA, crucial sites and corridors will be left out. Given the tremendous people-development which is inevitable in this area, over the next 50 years, the existing protected habitat is not adequate.

-only the Bio-diversity Option provides adequate protection of the corridors which a free-existing population needs. Go with that Option; help to get NREPA adopted, if you really intend to recover the Bitterroot bears.

5 -honestly and openly allow input by and research by independent bear researchers. The present "in house" control precludes any really necessary research from being done. That is not the way that you get good answers.

The proposed Conservation Biology Alternative provides what bears need, and leaves out all the special interest loop-holes in the Recommended Alternative:

6 :keeps the bears as "threatened."

:refuses bears from other critical areas.

:promotes the acceptance of Big Wilderness; Bear/Wolf Wilderness.


;requires/allows input from independent researchers.

;provides protection for corridors.

;limits roads, other developments.

;recognizes the limits of the Bitterroot habitat.

:is far more supportive of what people want, and what the knowledgeable bear scientists recommend.


Chas. Jonkel, Director
Ursid Research Center